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ABSTRACT

Certain basic principles must be accepted if colleges and universities are to function in an orderly, purposeful way and to lay down those conditions necessary to insure the presence of effective leadership on the campus. Some basic principles are: (1) a college or university exists to serve the general society that created it and that supports it; (2) its constituencies should be provided with an opportunity to be informed and heard; (3) in the eyes of the law a college or university is its governing board, commonly known as the board of trustees; and (4) the major functions of a public college or university are teaching/learning, scholarship/research, and appropriate public service, as determined ultimately by the board of trustees. The role of the president is: (1) to serve as chief executive officer; (2) to act with authority; (3) to recommend policies for consideration by the board and the implementation of these policies; and (4) to understand and work with the board. (KE)

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BASIC RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS

A statement Adopted by the Board of Directors of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, May 6, 1970

The history of American higher education strongly supports the contention that no college or university has made important progress except under the leadership of an outstanding president. At the present time, unfortunately, colleges and universities are experiencing increasing difficulty in attracting and holding able persons as chief administrative officers. And individuals remaining in such positions stand virtually unanimous in the opinion that their role has become much more difficult and demanding.

It is the purpose of this document, therefore, to identify certain basic principles that must be accepted if colleges and universities are to function in an orderly, purposeful way and to lay down those conditions necessary to insure the presence of effective leadership on the campus.

Basic Principles

1) Before anything else, a college or university (particularly a public one) exists to serve the general society which created it and which supports it; such an institution does not belong to a particular group of persons within that society or within that institution.

2) A college or university serves many constituencies – faculty, staff, students, alumni, and parents of students being the closest ones. All of these constituencies have a stake in the institution and its development, and all should be provided with an opportunity to be informed and heard.

3) Legally defined, a college or university does not consist of any one or combination of these constituencies. In the eyes of the law, a college or university is its governing board, most commonly known as the board of trustees.

4) The major functions of a public college or university are teaching/learning, scholarship/research, and appropriate public service, as determined ultimately by the board of trustees. These functions cannot be illegally interfered with or eliminated except at the risk of destroying the institution.

The Role of the College President

I **Executive Officer:** The president serves as chief executive officer of the college or university. In this capacity, he reports and recommends directly to the board of trustees. Although the president listens to the voices of all constituent groups, it must be recognized that he functions primarily as the administrative arm of the board and that all legal governing authority resides with the board.

II **Authority:** The selection of the president is the board of trustees' most important decision. Having once made that selection, the board must insure that the president is vested with all the authority necessary to carry out the duties and responsibilities for which he is held accountable. The board (and, if the institution is part of a multi-college system, its central staff) must operate in a manner which does not erode the authority of the president but which enhances the autonomy of the institution.

III **Responsibilities:** As chief executive officer, the president is responsible for recommending broad policies for consideration by the board and implementing these policies once they have been approved by the board. Major areas of presidential responsibility include:

1) The direction of current and long-range planning related to institutional goals, academic programs and teaching approaches, research, public service, enrollment projections, and physical plant development.

2) The development and maintenance of appropriate administrative organization and policy-making structure for the most efficient and effective utilization of institutional resources.

3) The development and maintenance of a personnel system concerned with the recruitment, selection, assignment, supervision, evaluation, and promotion and tenure of all personnel employed by the institution.

4) The preparation and presentation of the financial budget and the allocation and supervision of all appropriated and other funds that finance any activities under the jurisdiction of the college.

5) The development and maintenance of the facilities and equipment necessary for the support of the college's functions.

IV **Relationship with Governing Board:** As chief executive officer of the institution, the president deserves to have a clear understanding with his governing board concerning the following working relationships:

1) The board of trustees should invite the president to attend all meetings of the board (the only exception being when the board meets in executive session to act on the president's salary and other personal matters). The board should not meet with any representatives of the college's various constituencies without the presence of the president.

2) The board of trustees should ask the president for his recommendations on all matters before the board that may affect the college. No changes affecting an institution in any regard should be made by the board (or a coordinating board, commission for higher education, central staff, or other state agencies) without appropriate prior consultation with and recommendations from the president of that institution.

3) The board of trustees should hold the president free of any personal liability in the execution of his duties and responsibilities so long as he is acting as the board's chief executive officer. This should include protection against claims from damage suits and physical and psychological harassment.

4) The board of trustees should recognize that it, and not the president, holds final responsibility for the health, safety, and welfare of the institution and its personnel, particularly students. The president's main responsibility is that of providing students with reasonable opportunities to obtain an education, in accordance with the laws of the surrounding community, the policies of the board, and the resources of the institution.

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